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### The Essence of Balance

A healthy lifestyle is a balanced one. I have heard this in one way or another throughout my life, from science lovers and art lovers alike, including a podiatrist and a music teacher. Balance is better achieved if there is an even amount of objectivity and subjectivity in one's life. In some areas of expertise, it is necessary for there to be more objectivity, which is what science provides, but other careers involve mostly art which is a subjective process that involves emotion and opinion. In medicine, many processes involve creativity along with facts, such as engineering of surgical reinforcement equipment. Another part of medicine, psychiatry, involves the "study and treatment of mental illness, emotional disturbance, and abnormal behavior" ("psychiatry"). Specifically, pediatric psychiatry is this same field of science but particularly focused on children and their possible mental illness, disturbances, and/or abnormal behaviors ("psychiatry"). Art is a specific way for a person to express their feelings. These psychiatrists may have non-verbal children express their feelings through art, such as drawing. This is a way for the child to be subjective, creating an opportunity for the psychiatrist to decipher how the child is feeling through their art. Pediatric psychiatrists use science to objectively observe, diagnose, and treat disorders, but without the subjectivity and coping mechanisms that art can

provide, a majority of cases would be much more difficult to resolve, and psychiatrists could struggle with going to work every day.

As a psychiatrist, the arts will help me cope with the battles of the mind such as reality versus illusion, and life versus death, and other topics that may arise while I am helping a child through a problem that they are experiencing. As I delve into the minds of people who experience things that seem real, such as hallucinations, or hearing voices in their heads, I will need to be able to know what is real. Along with this, I will need to be able to cope with knowing the things that these children experience and have experienced. The arts will allow me to “regain [my] spiritual balance and find meaning in more than trying to technically manage every aspect of [my] being from womb to tomb” (Ma). Because I will be trying to help children cope with things like suicidal thoughts, I will need to also stay real to what helps me cope with the “agony of death which... we try to avoid thinking about,” because I will need to understand the prevalence of death and how it affects the mindsets of some children but also not let it affect my ability to work and live a happy life. I can successfully do this through having fun with things like singing, which I believe is a soulful form of art because it connects with emotion. When I sing to songs that I can relate to, I instantly feel as though I am not alone in this world and that I can connect to someone who has gone through something similar to me such as a loss of a family member, or how things have changed over the years of one’s life. Art is the factor that can make my job feel less stressful and challenging by allowing me to cope with the things I experience.

Along with coping, art allows people to use the aspects of subjectivity, such as creativity, opinion, emotion, and style, to their advantage by showing who they really are and how they

think. Psychiatrists can use this to their advantage by being able to decipher how a person thinks through their self expression. A person can express themselves through many ways like drawing, painting, creative writing, journal entries. All of these are expressions that a psychiatrist can observe to better understand how a person is thinking and feeling. Without the arts being used in this way, it would be much more difficult for a psychiatrist to do his job, especially if he is trying to diagnose children that are not willing to speak about what is happening inside their heads.

The self expression that the arts allows is a pure form of human consciousness. It does not involve things being broken down to understand how people think. Instead, it is a whole-hearted representation of how people think. The idea of reductionism, breaking complex things into smaller things that explain them, is hurtful to understanding of the historic philosophical questions such as “who are we?” Some scientists may believe that the idea of reductionism is helpful to reach the destination of fully understanding a scientific phenomenon. According to Steven Pinker in “Science is Not Your Enemy,” the idea of reductionism is confused with the term intelligibility, though they explain the same process. Pinker believes that reductionism is considered a sin, but intelligibility “explain[s] a complex happening in terms of deeper principles,” which do not “discard its richness” (Pinker). This refutes the idea that reductionism or intelligibility is hurtful to the understanding of long searched for answers of these philosophical questions, although Jonah Lehrer in “The Future of Science... Is Art?” believes that this processes is exactly what is limiting our knowledge. A specific location where reductionism is hindering is when observing the consciousness of the human mind. Lehrer states that “our self-consciousness seems to require a top-down approach,” due to how long we have been researching the brain with neuroscience and still have not progressed any further in

understanding consciousness (Lehrer). A top-down approach would involve artistic or creative thinking instead of using a break down of scientific processes, such as what pediatric psychologists use to understand the behavior of children. This may be the answer to the question “who are we?” and “why are we here?” which science has been searching for for centuries.

In order for science to progress, scientific claims and findings need to “nurture opportunities for the falsifications of its own beliefs” (Pinker). In Pinker’s essay “Science is Not Your Enemy,” he believes that science needs to constantly be proven wrong in order for us to understand the world. He believes that we need to integrate “skepticism, open debate, formal precision, and empirical tests” when trying to disprove scientific findings (Pinker). I believe that this is a valid claim because if everything we think about were believed as fact, there would be a lot more error in science than there already is. Although Pinker offers mostly scientific approaches to falsification of science, I believe that this is where art could be the most useful for debunking things that are not actually correct. Open debate is a good start to this, as it uses the human mind to look at both sides of a claim and try to break it apart, this involves perspective and opinion, leading to subjectivity. This could go a step further if we added creative ways to debate or debunk scientific studies. If humans are able to use their consciousness instead of scientific tests to falsify or qualify something, then we will be fast approaching the goal of breaking through scientific limitation. As psychiatry advances more and more through creative thinking within open debate, the processes used to understand the human behavior will improve as well.

Although many laboratory scientists would argue that arts do not play a significant role in science, it is clear that the STEAM model may help even these scientists to develop stronger flexible thinking. I agree with Yo Yo Ma that the “most proficient way to teach the values of collaboration, flexibility, imagination, and innovation... is through the performing arts.” Having the ability to flexibly think results in the better understanding of things from other perspectives. If a person is able to flexibly think, they become more empathetic. Because the arts teach flexibility and subjectivity, and science teaches critical thinking and objectivity, it is important to have both within education. In a job such as psychiatry, it is very important to have empathy when working with a patient to be able to understand their situation and try to help, but without critical thinking, a psychiatrist would not know how to then diagnose or treat the patient’s possible illness. This is exactly how the involvement of arts in education can help. Arts create empathetic thinking through socialization, especially in the performing arts, such as singing, dancing, and drama.

The arts have many uses for pediatric psychiatrists. Using the arts as a coping mechanism is functional because it can help not only the patient, but the doctor as well. As doctors become more enveloped in the patient’s case, it is essential that they can separate the case from their own personal lives, and arts is the way to bring back self expression and personal expression through things like singing, painting, and drawing. The arts make a psychiatrist’s job more effective through using the breakdown of the patient’s self expression to better understand abnormal behaviors. The arts specifically compliments science in this way because the psychiatrist can then diagnose and treat the patient’s possible disorder. Jobs are constantly becoming more and more efficient, but without the help of debunking old and impotent methods through creative

thinking and debate, the advancement of careers such as psychiatry would drastically lessen.

Without the arts, science would be left with no creativity or newness. Most fields of science utilize the benefits of art more than some people may realize. Without models, diagrams, metaphors, self expression, creative thinking, debate, and genuine human connection, how could we ever, as a “highly interdependent global civilization,” come to a conclusion of why we are here and who we are (Ma)?